

The LENINIST

To beat racism and fascism - Smash the system that creates it

THE GROWTH of the European far right and the increase of racist attacks in Britain have highlighted the need for an effective anti-racist counterattack. For some on the British left this has been restricted to a narrow focus on the fringe fascist groups such as the British National Party and the National Front. This is wrong.

Violent racism and chauvinism cannot be reduced to a relative handful of Hitler fans. The majority of racist attacks are, as ever, carried out by individuals and gangs not organisationally associated with the fascists. Through racial harassment and attacks, gangs force families out of an area.

Their attacks are racist, their language is racist, their focus is racist. To black people, the victims of their attacks, the precise political affiliation of such thugs must be a matter of scant concern. However, the foremost example of this is one gang distinguishable by its size, degree of organisation and dress. It is called the police. Behind it stands the British state. Racism is as British as the Union Flag. To defeat it we must track the beast to its lair, the British state and the capitalist system.

Anti-fascist activists, within the Anti Nazi League and elsewhere, need to move away from the sterile debate as to what is an 'organised fascist' and what is not, and take up the necessity of mobilising against racism on a mass basis. To do this, we first have to honestly consider the nature of this narrow anti-fascist focus and the 'solutions' it provided in the 1970s, on which much of today's activity is based.

There is an unfortunate myth on the left that the Anti Nazi League of the 1970s defeated the National Front. This is wrong. In the 1970s support for the NF was based not so much on a comprehensive fascist ideology but on anti-immigration racism. It was the Tories rather than the ANL that played the dominant role in destroying the NF then, by addressing themselves to and winning over the Front's basis of support by playing the race card.

Defeat for the NF was not a defeat for racism. Indeed, by the Tories' shift rightward and occupation of a more openly chauvinist stance, racism within society became more 'respectable'. Margaret Thatcher's tub thumping about making Britain great again and waving the red, white and blue butcher's apron over the Falklands had far more resonance with ordinary people than John Tyndal's deranged rantings about the 'white race' could ever have.

Those on the left that are all jittery about the 'fascist menace' at the moment should take a sober look at history. Fascism will, if it comes, be the result of a profound political crisis, the failure of the workers to make revolution, and an attempt to overcome the splits in the bourgeoisie using force sponsored from within the bourgeoisie. This was what lay behind Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922, through Hitler's rise to power in 1933 to Chile's Pinochet in 1973 and Turkey's Evren in 1980. At the moment, the capitalist

Fighting racism cannot be reduced to campaigning against today's fascist sects. It must be torn out at the roots

system in Britain needs no such emergency solutions from Tyndal or anyone else. The main threat to the working class, and to black people, is the state, still dominated by liberal 'democratic' ideology.

The organised fascists we experience today in the form of the BNP are a minor part of the problem, they are not it. We should not blow them out of proportion. But nor should we ignore them. As with other forms of attack on the working class and the oppressed, we need a working class response to them (see article below).

In fighting fascism, we must locate it as something which stems from the nature of capitalism itself, not an isolated and abhorrent phenomenon. It feeds off the splits and degradation that capitalism, even in the guise of its most 'democratic' representatives, foments within our class. It is for this reason that any anti-fascist movement must be anti-racist and by definition anti-state.

An anti-fascist movement that ignores the racist state and its racist police force is a danger itself through its narrow focus, which sows illusions among

its activists. As an example, on a recent picket of Bethnal Green police station by ANL supporters, when a BNP counter-demonstrator was arrested, many Socialist Workers Party members applauded the police. Realistically, who is the greatest danger: a drunken member of a bunch of fringe inadequates, or the state's strong arm in our communities? Black and Asian people face state racism every day in the form of the Home Office, at the end of the policeman's fist, and in the workplace.

So when we are told that the ANL should not raise the slogan 'racist police off our streets', should not concern itself with battles in the workplace against racism and should not organise locally against racist attacks, we have to wonder why the SWP - the main force behind the ANL nationally - is taking such a line.

Within the ANL, communists are campaigning for a militant anti-racist, anti-imperialist platform. In response we are told what we should be doing is going to Brick Lane to smash the BNP's paper sale. We agree. With united working class action we can and must

do both. But when all that can be offered by the SWP is a mass leafleting session to not "vote Nazi", we cannot help but wonder is this enough? When a mass leafleting session in the East End is posed against organising community defence in all local areas, whether the BNP sell there or not, we cannot help but wonder is this enough? Does the SWP seriously believe that this is enough to fight fascism and racism?

On Sunday August 16, CPGB comrades joined other ANLers in Tower Hamlets and surrounding areas and were taken to Brick Lane to, supposedly, smash the BNP, which was standing in a council election in Spitalfields. SWP members in true scaremongering style warned of the danger of votes for the BNP, and rushed into action with Anti Nazi League leaflets, "Don't Vote Nazi". Given that 60-65% of the community in this area are Asian there is hardly a threat of a BNP dominated council. In the event, they only got about 80 votes. To suggest the BNP has a chance acts only as propaganda for the BNP by wildly exaggerating its importance. But worse is to leave it at that. As

if not voting Nazi will reduce racist attacks in the area.

Of course we recognise the boost it would give the BNP if they gained a large percentage of the white vote in the area, so it is important to fight them electorally. But what alternative is the ANL leadership putting forward? To stand independently on an actively anti-racist platform? To take action into our own hands and not rely on the council? Or maybe we should vote for the Labour Party? Who knows? The leaflet offers no positive alternative, just "Don't Vote Nazi".

SWP members have also criticised the notion of doing any independent local work at all. The ANL, apparently, is a national campaign and should stay as such. There is no mention of this purely national focus in the ANL newsletters, and leading SWP member Lindsey German seems to agree with us that the ANL "has to be built locally through activity, in the unions and workplaces, on the estates, through opposition to the Nazis" (Socialist Review, February 1992).

Racist and fascist attacks cannot be stopped through an abstract 'national' campaign. In the ANL the SWP has on its hands a campaign that it clearly does not know what to do with. Yet something needs to be done, and can be done, with the ANL. Rank and file members need to take the initiative that their own leadership so clearly lacks. The current unfocused and defeatist nature of the guidance given by the SWP tops was summed up by one SWP member, who commented to us that it was difficult to mobilise anything at the moment, because there was nothing to mobilise around, and explained there is nothing like "a racist murder to get them out".

This individual statement expresses the profound lack of strategy and effective politics within the ANL. It is clearly wrong to build an anti-fascist movement around funeral parades and abstractly propagandist 'anti-fascism'. We want to stop racist murders, not simply mourn them. To do this, local mobilisation is clearly essential. Racist murders are not going to be stopped by 'nice' policemen or by demonstrations. They can only be stopped by the working class coming together to defend itself. Workers' defence is essential if we are to win the war against fascism and racism on our doorsteps.

Fascism, let alone racism, cannot be defeated by appealing to narrow anti-Nazi sentiment. It can only be done on the basis of a working class programme that combines a commitment to physically confront the vermin of the BNP and NF with the necessity of organising workers for defence against racist attack, whether it be by lumpen gangs or the police. Such a programme that brings workers together to fight as a class cannot be realised just by chanting "black and white, unite and fight". It must address what prevents us from uniting - racism. It must address the roots of that racism in the capitalist system.

If you want to fight fascism, fight the bosses.

Linda Addison

Defending our class

THE NEED to build effective defence for workers' actions, through workers' defence corps - the working class, democratically organised to protect itself - is one that has always been treated seriously by this organisation. Our commitment towards this goal is something that other organisations seem to find quite amusing, drawing forth such epithets as 'Genghis Khan communists' and 'Leninist commandos'!

Militant, for instance, ridicules the idea and tells us that the answer lies in calling on the Labour Party to defend workers in struggle. It tries to tell us that the police force (one of the state's principal forms of coercion) is composed merely of 'workers in uniform', and therefore all we need do is persuade our 'class brothers' to be more class conscious in their dealings with workers in struggle.

The fact that it was their 'workers in uniform' who attacked the anti-poll tax demonstration in London, on March 31 1990, seems to have escaped this 'revolutionary' organisation.

Communists today take their lead from the work done around this question by the Communist Party in the 1920s. The communist position on defending our class was highlighted during the 1926 General Strike: "After police charges on mass pickets, the defence corps, which 150 workers had joined at the outset, was reorganised.

Its numbers rose to 700, of whom 400, commanded by workers who had been NCOs during the war, marched in military formation through the town to protect the picket. The police did not interfere again" (*Workers Weekly*, June 11 1926).

More recent examples of the necessity of workers' defence corps were to be found in the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5. A form of workers' action was to be seen in the miners' hit squads, formed during the latter stages of the strike.

But *Socialist Worker* attacked the actions of the hit squads as "individual acts" (December 7 1984). The SWP's appraisal of the strike in the book *The Great Strike* dismissed the hit squads, as they "were not a substitute for mass picketing ... they weren't a substitute for real solidarity" (p194). But the biggest mass picket, Orgreave, was smashed by the police because it was not adequately organised and defended by working class fighting formations.

The need for workers' defence corps today is just as important as it was in the past. Workers in struggle today are faced by police attack on picket lines, demonstrations, and in their own communities. In addition, racist attacks are escalating in Britain, as on the continent. This, in particular, needs a response that has a practical force. Answers that stop at condemnation, or abstract demands for 'the community'

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Ben Ruthven



PITY the country returned to the past. Pity the country blessed by the world's new order. Pity the country protected by Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Pity Yugoslavia, torn apart by democratic counterrevolution and plunged into civil war. Doctor, now Lord Death, is a fitting peacemaker.

According to imperialist propaganda, Serbia is the source of all evil; without it everything would be sweetness and light. To sustain such nonsense requires the most unoriginal, overworked, and yet because of their origins, still powerful metaphors.

Serbia has apparently embarked on a Nazi-style war for *lebensraum* and *anschluss*, requiring Nazi-style 'ethnic cleansing' and a 'final solution'. Naturally its detention camps become death camps, on a par with Auschwitz, Treblinka and Sobibor, and its leader Slobodan Milosevic becomes an Adolf Hitler mark II, intent on further, maybe world, conquest.

It is not our intention to excuse Serbia or Milosevic. Serbia is no socialist state which should be defended unconditionally by communists. Milosevic long ago gave up the pretence of being any sort of communist. He, and the clique around him, are narrow minded and vicious nationalists. The Serbian state they sponge off serves not the masses but their exploitation by the growing industrial, banking and bureaucratic bourgeoisie.

The interests of the working class in Serbia lie in the overthrow of Milosevic and his gang, but we do not look to imperialism to do the job. As evidenced by two world wars, the Korean, Vietnamese, Gulf and countless other smaller wars, imperialism means death. Imperialism, and its present day UN front, has no genuine concern for the Muslim people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The imperialist powers have their own sordid agenda, which could well see Alija Izetbegovic's republic wiped off the map. After all it has no oil. The only thing valuable about this Muslim state for imperialism is crocodile tears.

The US is eager to use the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia to exert its now undisputed role as international policeman and number one bully (and perhaps use it as a test bed for what is to come in the ex-Soviet Union). The EC, for its part, wants to incorporate the whole of Europe into its sphere of influence. Germany in particular is determined to finalise the break-up of Yugoslavia so that its richest former republics, Slovenia and Croatia, can be fully integrated into its economy. And all of them want to stop the crisis going beyond the borders of ex-Yugoslavia and drawing Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Hungary, Turkey and Russia into a new Balkan war.

The working class everywhere has a duty to oppose all imperialist plans, interventions and sanctions. Those who do not, whatever their subjective intentions, end up in the camp of imperialism. A typical case is the left Labour paper *Tribune*. Objectively it criticises the Labour leadership and the government from the right. In the name of 'socialism' it boasts that it was calling for British military intervention six months ago. These social imperialists walk in the footsteps of Henry Hyndman and Benito Mussolini.

Ex-Yugoslavia is experiencing a counterrevolutionary meltdown. Reactionaries and demagogues of all varieties have used the different histories of the same South Slav people in order to gain a popular base. The massacres, battles and hatreds that pit neighbour against neighbour serve as the midwife of bourgeois states in Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia. But the fact that these states have staked their independence on the narrowest of nationalist programmes inevitably leads to war.

In a region where history, great powers and religion have separated South Slavs into Serbians, Montenegrans, Croats, Slovenes and Macedonians and then mixed them again, the triumph of 'ethnic politics' means barbarism, mutual ruination and a denial of elementary rights. To be Croatia it must deny the rights of Serbs, to be Serbia it must deny the rights of Albanians.

Under these conditions it should hardly surprise us that those who can take up arms and seek allies. The Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have done just that and their compatriots in Macedonia will no doubt do the same. While they have Serbia, the Bosnian Muslims have no one in what was Yugoslavia. That is why they have fallen into the arms of imperialism ... and even mortared their own people in an effort to gain western public sympathy.

The solution to this massive human tragedy will not be found in imperialism. What is required is the working class politics of revolution, socialism and communism. Not Titoism, which began life by promoting Yugoslav nationalism and ended divided along federal and ethnic lines, but the communism of Marx and Lenin, Kolarov and Rakovsky.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Dictate

In *The Leninist* No119, Alan Merrik conducted an intriguing interview with M Kia, a representative from the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*).

M Kia declared that *Rahe Kargar* had replaced the term 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' with 'the rule of the working class'. The reason given was because the term "had come to represent the dictatorship of the party," and is "a substitute for party-state".

To begin with Merrik concedes that "the rule of the working class in effect means the dictatorship of the proletariat." Later he insists that the dropping of the formulation dictatorship of the proletariat "is cause for concern".

Having initially acknowledged that Marx and Engels used the two phrases "interchangeably", he then asks "Why sacrifice one for the other - particularly the more scientific for the less scientific? And, more importantly, why now?" This doesn't make sense. If either term adequately expresses the identical political meaning, how can one be judged to be more or less scientific than the other? And if in effect they mean the same thing, and they were interchangeable before, surely the same licence applies now? More importantly, if not, why not?

What Red Action has repeatedly stated is that this is a phrase to which Marx attributed no *special* significance, over and above the other expression employed by him to describe "the self government of the producers". While Merrik concedes that "*Rahe Kargar* is far from regurgitating the position of Kautsky", this is precisely the accusation made on a previous occasion by *The Leninist* against Red Action.

Rahe Kargar have also dropped the title Marxist-Leninist, not because they feel it represents a concept based entirely on a contradiction, rather, as they explain, "to draw a line between us and ... a term which originated with Stalin". However, while this is perfectly understandable, for the purpose of this debate, the line up that needs to be drawn is not between Lenin and Stalin, or Lenin and Kautsky, but between Lenin and Marx. It is only this contest between the historical heavyweights Marx vs Lenin, that will once and for all resolve this question.

Joe Reilly
Red Action

Stalin

Congratulations on publishing *From October to August*. It is written in a lively style with a sharp political flair. There are many interesting observations and insights, and also original thought contained in it. I suppose it is a reflection of your organisation, which does emulate in certain ways the proletarian character of the old CPGB.

I will briefly criticise the political ideas, which in the main could be classified as broadly Trotskyite. There is much I can agree with, such as the analysis of the coup, Gorbachev and perestroika. I disagree however with your analysis of Stalin, who is classified as a centrist. By implication therefore, you mean that had the Left Opposition been victorious, the bureaucracy as personified by Stalin would have been defeated. To this effect you criticise Trotsky for not taking the power struggle seriously.

But what would Stalin's defeat have led to? In order to survive in a hostile world, Stalin realised that the Soviet Union had to industrialise very rapidly, which did happen, and in the process laid the foundations for the defeat of Hitler and the survival of the revolution. The transitional period is not smooth and easy, or clear. Indeed, it is nasty, messy and poses all kinds of political and moral dilemmas for any socialist. The revolution must be able to defend itself, and requires leaders

made of tough steel, not petulant prima donnas. Stalin was a consistent defender of that revolution, so the term 'centrist' is inappropriate.

The trials and purges were necessary and, in the process many, many innocent workers and party members were imprisoned or executed. The CPSU, which had already degenerated, was further weakened, strengthening the anti working class elements. Stalin was unable to prevent this, and the CPSU fell prey to the new intelligentsia, which arose out of the need to run the state. There was no mechanism to control this stratum politically. "The Stalin leadership and all the problems and issues of the Stalin period occurred in definite historical, economic and political conditions over which neither Stalin nor the CPSU had any control: the encirclement and isolation of the USSR by imperialism in alliance with international social democracy" (Eddie Abrahams *Fight Racism Fight Imperialism* No108).

The Left Opposition was a petty bourgeois trend, and did not represent the interests of the revolution. Their victory would have meant counterrevolution. It is political stupidity to think otherwise. The ultimate blame for the collapse of the Soviet Union lies with the hostile militarism of world imperialism. Also, unlike Cuba, the advancement of proletarian consciousness was sadly neglected, and so too was the active participation of the masses. This made succumbing to western propaganda easier. The development of the human aspect of socialism cannot be emphasised enough, through conscious effort as Che Guevara advocated.

The privileges enjoyed by the working classes in the imperialist heartlands bought off its militancy. Thus we were unable to deliver the solidarity needed to the Soviet Union and the oppressed nations. It is a great pity the book does not go in much detail into the many fine legacies of the October revolution, such as the provision of social welfare to the masses, support for anti-imperialist struggles in the world, and containing at enormous sacrifice the naked terror of the now unchecked US imperialism. In short, the world would have been completely different without the Soviet Union.

Lila Patel
North London

Non-history

I have often been impressed by the courage and dedication of individual anarchists, but comrade Allen's letter attacking Marx for racism exposes the narrowness of anarchist theory (*The Leninist* No122).

When Marx calls the inhabitants of the Balkans "unhistoric peoples" he doesn't mean that they have faulty genes or that they have no history in the ordinary way. Rather their political views as expressed in their popular revolts turn them into the satraps of one or another of the regional powers, preventing the development of working class consciousness and working class interests.

Marx saw that the best chance for the working class to make progress lay in the development of large states where industrialisation could proceed more quickly and chauvinism could be more easily broken down.

The present counterrevolution in the Balkans is not caused by ancient historical enmities but by the collapse of Yugoslavia. However, the attempt to resolve the problems by reverting to the historic practices of the nineteenth century is not due to communists mystifying the past but to nationalists mystifying the present.

The way forward to revolutionary internationalism is by encouraging a pan-national consciousness among workers in Europe, not in praising them for separating into exclusive reactionary statelets based principally on driving other workers out and taking their homes and jobs. These statelets are and will remain totally dependent on one

imperialist bloc or another for their existence and will, as in Marx's day, be a bulwark for anti working class reaction.

Philip Kent
Essex

Safe sex

Mike Fielding makes some interesting points in his reply to my article concerning Aids (*The Leninist* No122). A couple of areas however need to be dealt with further.

Of course, when gay men in Britain became aware of their vulnerability to HIV, some began to consciously take precautions so as not to spread the virus. I would argue however that many of these men had adopted a gay lifestyle which can be classed as 'open' or at least 'semi-open'; that they are the men who frequent the 'scene' on a regular basis, have access to information on HIV through various leaflets and magazines found on gay premises and are likely to know other men diagnosed as antibody positive, some dying with Aids.

Without being too rigid or inflexible over the question however, I do not think it incorrect to state that the 'non-out' section of the population rarely frequent gay venues and are not therefore constantly reminded of the serious threat that Aids poses to them as gay men. Sporadic safe-sex campaigns are worthless because they fail to tackle the real social problems that cause the spread of the disease in the first place.

Prejudice and social stigma block people from openly declaring their sexuality. To many, even entering a gay bar is out of the question for fear of being 'discovered'. Information on HIV and Aids is restricted from reaching these people and it is left to the sanctity of the media to tell us about how to we should run our sex lives. The campaign by the establishment may be appropriate if you believe the population as a whole are at risk and you have the time to plan your next sexual encounter, but for the thousands of gay men who, for whatever reason, are unable to come to terms with their sexuality, a chance stop-off at their local 'cottage' is nearly all they can do to express their identity. Such unplanned encounters hardly present the ideal environment to indulge in safe sex!

I too would suggest it is a good idea for the working class to continue to use condoms. But we do not need the government to tell the straight population how a condom can stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Indeed, as communists we should surely not line up with the capitalist state and allow it to set the moral agenda on this issue. The establishment will promote the idea of safe sex for its own political ends, not least in its efforts to install a greater degree of control over the masses.

After all, if it can get away with convincing workers that the spread of Aids can be controlled by individuals simply changing their sexual habits then it has a wonderful excuse for not finding the necessary finance for research into a cure and winning millions to believe that social problems such as Aids, unemployment, racism or homelessness can be overcome by 'responsible' individual behaviour rather than from collective action against the system - the main cause of all of society's social problems.

Gareth Phillips
East London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

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Two steps needed One step taken



A revolutionary approach to finance finances a revolutionary approach to communist work

AT THE BEGINNING of this year, the leadership of our organisation - the Provisional Central Committee - met to consider the prospects for the coming year. Reviewing the tasks we had set ourselves, the PCC estimated that the Party would need a budget of £70,000.

From that meeting, the 9th Party Offensive was launched to meet that target. This Offensive became the most drawn out, the most ambitious and the most successful communists in Britain have organised so far.

The £70,000 total that the PCC estimated as necessary would have represented an achievement some two and one third times bigger than the £30,000 Summer Offensive of 1991. We did not meet our £70,000 target; but it would be quite wrong to present this shortfall simply as a 'failure'.

It is more correct to say that our organisation has taken just one step forward instead of two. The forward momentum remains: the Communist Party continues to nudge its way forward in this difficult period.

Here are the facts of this year's Offensive:

- We will have raised around £47,000 when everything is in, possibly over £50,000. This represents a 60% increase on last year's Offensive total.
- This total has been won not on the basis of significantly more comrades. Membership and periphery of our organisation has remained more or less static and more or less uniformly poor. Our comrades have become far more 'professional' in their outlooks as revolutionaries, including in the important area of fundraising. For example, the comrades who came second and third respectively in the 'most raised' category brought in £3,500 and £3,200 respectively, the winner over £4,000!

- It has been a long drawn out Offensive, interrupted by events like the general election, marches and other actions. We have had to fight the 'flop factor' that inevitably follows all 'heavy' Party activities. Keeping the momentum going has been hard, especially given the corrosive and demoralising effects of the capitalist recession. It is an ill wind, though: this year, a number of our comrades were able to

push their individual targets up because of one off redundancy payments.

This year, a positive feature of the campaign has been the number of unorganised sympathisers who have contributed to the fund total, including comrades from Hatfield Main NUM. However, these more distant contacts of the Party sometimes get a rather strange impression about how we manage our financial affairs. To clarify matters for these comrades and others, we do not end any Party Offensive with a 'nest egg'. At the end of this year's campaign, for example, we do not find ourselves with nearly £50,000 in used notes, looking for a profitable area for investment.

We have undertaken a general election campaign (only five months ago, comrades!) during which we distributed over a quarter of a million individual pieces of literature in the four constituencies where we stood; We relaunched the *Daily Worker* in the latter period of the campaign and won the right to the name *in practice* against the threats of the *Morning Star*'s anti-communist apparatchiks. We have started the publication of the *Communism Lives!* book series. By the end of the election campaign, we had a Party print-shop up and running.

The fight to build the European conference hosted by our organisation in December of this year will require plenty of money, money that we do not have and which needs to be raised. The fight for the sinews of war of our organisation - its financial resources - never stops. As pointed out in *The Leninist* No 122, the only wealth our Party accumulates at the end of its annual Party Offensive "is measured by its development of cadre"; and viewed from this point of view (and only this point of view), the campaign "enriches us every year without exception".

Practice costs money and our organisation has no intention of retreating from its proud record of fighting to build hard, sharp practice around its theory. This period is not conducive to large scale actions, there is no spontaneous audience for the politics of the Party. For every paper, every pamphlet, every book we publish, for every action we put on, we have to fight to create an audience.

This obviously reflects the fact that our class, domestically and internationally, has suffered some major defeats over the past period. The struggles in the workers' movement remain overwhelmingly defensive. The pages of *The Leninist* must increasingly be given over to developing fighting tactics for our class during this hard period.

The work of the Party during this period must continue to challenge and probe new areas, to test out initiatives that will benefit us. But our activity must take account of the fact that the 'sea' we swim in - whether it be in the field of Irish solidarity, unemployed work, or industrial struggles - is not rich in terms of the creation of new activists apart from ourselves.

The actions of our organisation must become more time and cost effective. No organisation will make a fundamental breakthrough given this conjuncture of class forces. Nevertheless, we believe that our organisation - as evidenced by this year's Offensive and our outstanding record of activity this year so far - can continue to take important steps forward, both practically and, crucially, theoretically.

Marxism is under attack. This assault emanates not simply from avowed enemies, but from professed 'friends' of ours. In essence this period is a preparatory one. Our practice must reflect this fact, as must our work in the field of theory. The Party must turn its attention during this period of world reaction to defending, deepening and advancing our knowledge of Marxism.

We will never do this in some lofty, academic ivory tower. We will not give one millimetre on the practical work of our organisation and will happily part company with those who only talk a good revolution. As we have shown in previous years - and again this year with the magnificent achievement of the 9th Party Offensive - theory and practice for communists are indissolubly linked.

We will develop our organisation as the nucleus of a Party of what one writer called "warrior philosophers", starting now with the human material we have. This year's superb Party Offensive is an important milestone in that inspiring fight for the future.

Ian Mahoney

IN STRUGGLE

The UDA has been banned and Sinn Fein has not. Of course, we all know that the UDA is not SF's antiparallel, but that is not the point. For years the state did not move to ban SF for fear of a nationalist backlash, but that is not why it is restraining itself now. While a reaction of sorts would be precipitated, it would not be on the same scale as would have been possible five years ago. The British government is all too aware that to ban SF now would drive republicans in the opposite direction to that in which they are presently moving. 'Back into the arms of the IRA', as they put it. The republican leadership now states directly that those parties which it once considered to be the problem are now part of the solution. Meanwhile, the British state feels that it can move against the UDA because, with the republican movement marginalised, the need to terrorise the nationalist community is no longer so great. It possibly feels that regular forces are better agents to mop up any remnants of revolutionary republicanism who do not like their place in the new world order. Also it would not want any maverick loyalist actions upsetting things now. The UDA is dead set against the talks, and has warned Paisley *et al* on several occasions. MS

Six Anti Nazi League members were arrested in East London's Brick Lane on August 16. The arrests were made by the police in their efforts to end a 40 strong ANL demonstration confronting the 20 or so BNP members at its regular Sunday paper sale. The BNP was out in 'force', backing its candidate in the local Spitalfields council election. Following the arrests ANL supporters carried on a picket at Bethnal Green police station, chanting "Resist police attack! Organise to fight back!". The 'Brick Lane 6' have pleaded not guilty to the charges, including Highway Obstruction and Police Obstruction. Fighting fascists is no crime! Unfortunately, local ANLers who turned out the following week were unprepared to deal with the BNP, despite being told "we'll see you next week" by the fascists. This ill planned action led to a BNP assault on ANL activists and left wing paper sellers, hospitalising three. The response was to call a rally in Brick Lane on August 30 at 10.30am. However, after being promised an "East London mobilisation" to "smash the BNP", local activists were disappointed to see only about 40 people turn out, and stand 300 yards away from the BNP, in a position where they could not even be seen, let alone "smashed". We need to go beyond 'rallies' in response to fascist attack. "We fight back" must be more than a slogan; it must become a reality. The success BNP has enjoyed will not be deflated by leaflets and meetings, but by a regular presence that is organised to smash them off the streets. MF



Anti fascists must meet force with force

This year's TUC is being billed as the most important since World War II by the media. While this is a load of old hype - to put it politely - it is undoubtedly an important congress. In the wake of another Labour election defeat, the TUC stands face to face with its own inadequacy, if not irrelevancy. The politics and structures of the official workers' movement have been proven inadequate for the defence of even the most basic needs of the working class since the miners' strike. TUC affiliates now only organise about one third of the workforce. TUC tops have tried to fill another role in marketing trade union credit cards, and other such junk. Even the *Financial Times* has been moved to remark that "employees are getting a raw deal from their trade unions" (September 7). In addition, many functions of the TUC central bureaucracy are now being undertaken by the new 'super unions' produced by the current wave of mergers. While such mergers are positive, the way they are occurring is increasing inter-union sectionalism, as well as increasing the distance of the rank and file from the leadership. The unprecedented retreat of organised working class activity cannot be addressed by the politics of the bureaucracy. Relevant organisation for our class today will only come from that class in its own struggles. See our next edition for a comprehensive analysis of the state of the unions now, and the way forward. SQ

Make history



As we predicted last year, the Democratic Left has come up with plans for the disposal of our Communist Party's archives. The DL, which appropriated the CPGB's assets following last November's congress, has turned the Party's history into a separate profit centre, and intends to withdraw its "subsidy". According to DL boss Nina Temple, the "best prospect" is a handover to the Labour Party/TUC controlled National Museum of Labour History. Readers of *The Leninist* know that the best way to preserve and build on the history of the CPGB is to support this paper and the struggle to reforge the Party. We need £600 each month to guarantee publication. Send us your donation, and help us make history!

Vernon Douglas, Fund organiser

DEAR COMRADES, it is a well known axiom of Marxism that *all* social phenomena contain within them contradictory, negative and positive opposites. This truth is particularly relevant to current political questions in Britain and internationally, not least when it comes to what was the USSR and the fact that with its collapse the world has been plunged into the deepest, darkest depths of an unprecedented period of reaction.

We can gain confidence and be proud that our organisation was not one of those caught unawares by the reactionary nature of Gorbachevism. We communists knew full well, and said openly and loudly, that unless the Soviet working class carried through an 11th hour political revolution and resolved the crisis of bureaucratic socialism positively, there would be counterrevolution. It was counterrevolution that won the day, in the main, it must be stressed, peacefully and democratically.

Before and after, many were taken in, not least because, given this specific form of counterrevolution, and a cynical manipulation of the collective memory of October 1917, all sorts of terms and concepts found themselves paraded as *their opposites*. Not only did counterrevolution become revolution, but counterrevolutionaries became radicals and communists became conservatives.

Nevertheless while reaction laid hold of, and used for its own purposes, one collective memory in order to bury it, another, more distant, but still powerful collective memory had to be disinterred if popular support was to be garnered for capitalist restoration. That is why the August 1991 counterrevolutionary coup was characterised in the main by 'classic' nationalism. Yeltsin spoke in the name of Russia, draped himself in the colours of Russia, defended the Russian parliament and sought blessings from the priests of Russian Orthodox Christianity.

He was far from alone. In each former Soviet republic, the "death of communism" that *Socialist Worker* wanted us all to celebrate spewed forth a whole brood of ex-'communist' bureaucrats and popular front demagogues, each desperately seeking power through an appeal to the most narrow, most irrational and most retrogressive feelings and interests. Having planted, so they reaped. The nationalist wars, hate-politics and the continued dismembering of the formerly unified, interdependent and historically successful USSR economy is as well known as it is fitting testimony to the worth of these "heroic" new Tsars.

Obviously the rash of new currencies, armies, enmities, airlines, anthems, mythologies, flags and other paraphernalia of nation-building symbolises more than victory for the proto-bourgeoisie in the former Soviet Union. It symbolises a huge victory for international imperialism and a shattering defeat for the international working class.

The October Revolution has finally been crushed. The communist parties formed in its aftermath, and as a result of the inspiration it provided, have been killed off, tamed or marginalised. The world system of socialist states is no more, and those socialist states that survive show many of the same political, social and economic ills that provided the objective conditions for the August 1991 counterrevolution. Pax Americana has been allowed, vampire-like, to take a new lease of life, in what had looked like its *fin de siècle*. Predictably the beast has not blessed the world with the kiss of peace but the leg-irons of neo-colonial slavery. As shown by threats against Cuba, Libya, North Korea and Serbia and renewed threats against an already war-ravaged Iraq, US imperialism feels free to lord it over more arrogantly, ever more aggressively over its new world order.

There are parallels, such as the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 and the subsequent collapse of the First International, and above all the collapse of the Second International in 1914. However there can be no doubt that what has taken place in our time is on a qualitatively different scale - involving as it does the disintegration of not only parties but a system of well established states.

Does this mean the period of reaction we are now in will be more protracted than in the past? Not necessarily. If we only remember one thing about Marx's analysis of capitalism it should be this: it is the antagonisms brought about by the very successes of capitalism in expanding and continually revolutionising the forces of production that necessitates revolution against capitalism. When it comes down to it, that is why the debacle of August 1914 found its answer just over three years later in the form of the October Revolution, and why the present 'end of history' debacle could, in just as short a time, give way to something even bigger.

Of course, the intellectual prostitutes that staff capitalism's universities and media, as well as a clutch of Mosleyesque former 'believers', tell us that communism has failed and the Bolshevik 'experiment' was, from the start, doomed. We expect them to say no different. But partisans of the working class need the truth, and the truth is easy to see.

The counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was not about the failure of genuine communism, rather an inability and an unwillingness to put genuine communism into practice, and an inability and unwillingness to combat and sublate the capitalist features which remained within socialism. They might have awarded themselves medals by the chestful, but the 'official communist' leaders presided over a travesty of 'developed socialism' - a term which should have meant leaving far behind the *most advanced achievements of world capitalism* and enriching the *real rule of the working class* to the point where the state was beginning to be negated, and the other capitalist features of socialism were finally being eclipsed.

What existed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was not 'developed socialism'. No, it was bureaucratic or formal socialism. However, this form was not predetermined because of the supposed 'dogmatism' of Marxism-Leninism, nor its supposed 'authoritarian' politics. Nor was Russia voluntaristically taken beyond what was possible by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Such lies have been peddled by every well-read opportunist from Karl Kautsky to Robin Blackburn in an effort to hide their platonic revolutionism, their distaste for workers in the flesh and blood, and their cowardly apostatical goodbye to Marxism.

After World War I, Germany, Italy, Austria, Finland all very nearly went our way. If they had done, socialism, and the whole world, would have turned out very differently. Nevertheless, taking into account the isolation imposed on the USSR by world capitalism, what is remarkable is that it survived at all. History demanded a high price. Socialism survived in a perverted, atavistic and twisted form, and developed in a highly contradictory manner. It was this unfortunate *model* - copied (and sometimes imposed) on other, mainly just as excruciatingly backward, countries after 1945 - which, through its own laws of development, went into terminal crisis in the late 1980s.

Good from bad

It is more than a heart warming truism that out of every setback comes something good. It is, as we have said, a law of dialectics that every phenomenon, no matter how negative, has a positive side within it. That is indeed so. Without belittling the scale and extent of what we have just suffered, and the appalling consequences it will have in terms of human agony, torment and sorrow, a positive "revolutionary, subversive side which will overturn the old society" can already be detected.

In spite of all the trials and tribulations, the former socialist countries are being fully integrated into the world economy. The parochial nature of their economies is being ended for ever, the idea of 'communism in one country' will go the same way. It does not stop there. The belief that the spectre of communism has been exorcised means new antagonisms and splits are being opened up all the quicker in the once united facade of international imperialism. Its very moment of triumph is its undoing.

Furthermore, 'official communism', which dominated the most conscious and combative section of our class and held it back with utopian promises of a parliamentary road, is being swept away. What remains of this movement, which to all intents and purposes became in its dotage a safety valve for the bourgeois order, is definitely living on borrowed time.

Again, it is good that it is not only 'official communism' which is in crisis. Because of the period of reaction every trend in the workers' and revolutionary movement tainted with opportunism will experience its own moment of truth, its own crisis of identity and maybe existence. At this point in time it is notable that almost everyone is claiming, even with the benefit of hindsight, to be *spot on* about the August counterrevolution; claiming that they predicted it, that they adopted a correct attitude and advocated the right tactics. In short, that their world view has been vindicated. Such self-justifying claims are natural. But taking into account how they lined up with and cheered on counterrevolution as it unravelled world socialism, this is only proof of the gravity of their own crisis.

Positive

The future

past and

Speech by comrade John Bridge on August 1991, end of the 9th Party Offensive and the 72nd anniversary of the October Revolution

'Official communism' was most closely (not to say financially) linked with bureaucratic socialism. But there can be no denying that in their own different ways Trotskyism, SWP state capitalism, Maoism, Ticktinism and Enverism all constituted and defined themselves more *against* the regime in the USSR than they did for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Now it has gone, these *oppositionist* ideologies and the groupings hooked-up behind them will go into crisis. Their sectarian and naive hopes for exponential growth, now they imagine the backward sections of the masses will no longer tell them to 'get back to Russia', will collide with the reality of reaction, and end in bitter disappointment and disillusionment. This will create a situation of flux and in turn open the way for all sorts of new debates, alliances and coming together.

The formation of our CPGB offers important lessons here. Those who established and built Britain's *only* working class revolutionary Party, originally inhabited a wide variety *opposing* organisations. The founding congress of the Party was in effect a merger of the British Socialist Party, a left centrist organisation, and the Communist Unity Group, which still carried with it more than a tinge of syndicalism. A little later these comrades were joined by the majority of the Workers' Socialist Federation - which originated in the women's suffrage movement and had become a vehicle for 'left' communism under its charismatic former leader, Sylvia Pankhurst. Besides these three main left groups, the CPGB drew into its ranks more or less everything else of weight in the revolutionary movement, from the ILP left to the Socialist Prohibition Fellowship, as well as a rich seam of previously unaligned militant workers in the shops stewards and workers' committee movement.

Such a coming together was unquestionably inspired by the October Revolution. For every real revolutionary it instantly clarified the need for a vanguard party committed to violent revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, ie a Communist Party. Yet what was it that paved the way for such willingness and enthusiasm to take from abroad, to finally discard what was old and inadequate, and to unite with former opponents? The answer is obvious - the *negative* phenomenon of World War I and the collapse of the Second International. October 1917 was the prize, August 1914 the spur.

We are not about to indulge in a bout of unity for unity's sake mongering. We have seen more than enough of such hopeless and cynical manoeuvres in recent years from CPB and NCP 'official communists', and the SWP. No, we simply note that a period of reaction produces ideological crisis in the revolutionary workers' movement and that from this something greater than the sum of its parts can result.

Of course, for that to happen demands unity around the *highest, most advanced* theory available, and of course, that means unity around Marxism-Leninism. That is what the formation of the CPGB over July 31-

August 1 1920 concretised and what we have set our sights on emulating, though quite rightly on a higher plane. That is what we mean when we say 'reforge the CPGB'.

However much we admire our Party and its history, it must be said that the working class can never find liberation in the past, only in the future. So we are not out to recreate a dead past. What Britain needs is not a Communist Party circa 1920. It needs a Communist Party which leads and commands the support and loyalty of the majority of the population, centrally the working class. Only then can we seriously talk about winning and building the new, socialist order.

Capitalism's crisis

Citing the collapse of bureaucratic socialism and the demoralisation symptomatic of reaction, the pessimists, the faint hearted, the revisionists, those who are tired of life and the struggle even before they have really lived and struggled, think themselves confirmed in their philistine belief that socialism is unobtainable or impossibly far away. For these types capitalism has won, the working class is no longer the force it was ... and, after all, private life and the joys of a second rate career beckon.

We have no interest in saving these timid little souls from themselves. The working class is better off without their services. But because they are repeated, reinforced and refined by the bourgeois lie machine we must do everything we can to counter their corrosive and demoralising arguments. Not for reasons of party or faction, but because our class must be prepared and equipped for *decisive combat* in what is, in historic terms, no time at all.

Despite all that its sages and prophets were saying only a year ago, capitalism has not opened the gates to a new 1950s and 60s type golden age. It does not stand on the threshold of renewed dynamism and prosperity. On the contrary, capitalism stands on the threshold of an abyss, the *biggest, most devastating, general crisis* in the whole of its crisis-ridden history.

We can get some indication of capitalism's problems from John Major's much vaunted and seemingly ever illusive recovery. Forecasts for the British economy tell us that growth rates are going to remain pitifully low and unemployment viciously high - even according to their crooked figures there will be 3 million plus unemployed by this time next year. So there is nothing rosy about capitalism in this hour of its global triumph.

What of tomorrow? To answer that question we must take the long view of capitalism. Economists have known since the 18th century that capitalism develops in a cyclical pattern. Yet the fact of the matter is that first the five year and then the ten year cycle described and analysed by Marx in the mid-

Dialectics in the present

st 2 at a meeting called to celebrate the
anniversary of the CPGB's foundation

19th century has been superseded. As predicted by Engels in his penetrating preface to volume three of *Capital*, written after Marx's death, capitalism has, crucially through the credit system, greatly extended its cycle. Indeed, as we look back from the vantage point of 1992, it is clear that it has been stretched till it spans 50, 60 or maybe more years.

The last general crisis of capitalism began in 1914 and was only finally resolved with US victory in World War II. The heady 1950s-60s boom that followed inevitably gave way to the 1970s, 80s and 90s stagnation. The gloom of stagnation is interrupted by occasional upward oscillations, but these are characteristically speculative, more and more infrequent and ever more fleeting. This is the opening stanza of the new general crisis.

Because of the vastly extended scale of the new cyclical pattern, we are unable to predict when exactly pre-general crisis will become general crisis. Nevertheless we can predict with *absolute certainty* that it will, and say with equal certainty that all conditions are in place for it to do so. The situation is therefore pregnant with both the danger that imperialism's antagonistic blocs will attempt to resolve their contradictions through a World War III, and the promise that the class struggle of the proletariat will revive and seek out the scientific ideology needed to integrate capitalism's crisis into the "dialectics of action". If that is successfully done then victory over capitalism is certain. Certain, because although the working class can be defeated time and time again, it is always added to by the historic movement of capitalism and can never be dispensed with.

Hyping up new technology, robots and computers as if they are the replacement of the working class is the cutting edge of capitalist propaganda in our day. It is also intellectual rubbish, and therefore worthy of a class that itself stands as a threat to all and everything that its own system has created over 200 years. If the capitalist class could have done without us, it would have done so long ago. Unfortunately for them they will always need us for their profit, for their pampered and luxurious life-styles and simply in order to ensure their system continues from one day to the next. As Jimmy Reid said - when he was a workers' leader and before he became a renegade - they can take a year-long world cruise and things would carry on as normal. But if the working class stopped work, even for one day, the result would be chaos ... not least because none of the supposed 'post-working class' new technology, not the robots nor the computers, nothing but nothing, would move. The working class is necessary, capitalism is not.

Crisis of social capitalism

It is in the context of capitalism's pre-general crisis,

and the certainty of it becoming general crisis, that I now turn to what we call the general crisis of social democracy. By this we do not mean the Labour Party's inability to get elected, its defeat in four consecutive general elections. We mean something far more significant and important than that.

Let us begin by asking what social democracy is. Basically we have two definitions, a narrow definition, and a broad definition. Defined in the first sense we mean the politics of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement, with its main expressions, the trade unions and the Labour Party. But we can also understand the term in a broader way, as politics "for the benefit of the working class" within the bourgeois system. Here what we are referring to is not this or that organisation; more a tendency, a policy, then an actual moment, a realisation of this, in the evolution of capitalism.

Before dealing with this definition of social democracy directly it is necessary to take the widest, panoramic view of human history and its main, successive modes of production. We must take into our field of vision not only late capitalism and bureaucratic socialism but also primitive communism. If we do this it will be seen that in their decadence, in their final phase, all social systems take on *features*, carry out certain *tasks* of the next social system, albeit imperfectly, in a distorted way, and often negatively.

Primitive communism, in its last moments, took on aspects of the class system to come, while still remaining primitive communism in terms of social cohesion, equality and collective decision making for the *volk*. This was even though it had managed to introduce servitude or helotry for conquered outsiders. Only when the community itself was cleaved into *classes* did primitive communism finally die. Likewise ancient society typified by the Roman empire. With the reforms of Diocletian, and then Constantine, slaves were replaced, in terms of providing the main source of surplus product for the ruling class, by the peasant *coloni*. In step with this serfdom, the 'slave' system took on other features of feudalism - domination of the countryside over the cities, mercenary armies and political decentralisation. High feudalism in England and France produced the absolutist monarchy, which though in essence remaining feudalism, invented the nation state and constituted it as the home market, both quintessentially 'tasks of capitalism'.

The specific reasons for these *anticipations* are many and varied, but the underlying, determining reason is the growth of the productive forces so that they came to stand in contradiction to the existing social relations. Instead of committing an act of self-abolition, not surprisingly those dominating the old social relations attempted to save themselves by adopting the new while remaining the old. Out of fear of the future some demands and needs of the future are taken up or conceded in the name of society. In

this way the old sought to legitimize, justify and *preserve* itself, and at the same time pacify and hold back the new. Similar anticipative developments can also be seen under capitalism.

In volume three of *Capital* Marx said he considered the workers' cooperative factories, then in vogue, an attempt at the positive resolution of the antagonisms of capitalism. Although they reproduced all the "shortcomings" of the existing system they represented "within the old form the first sprouts of the new".

The same went, only *negatively*, for the general tendency of capitalist accumulation to concentrate and depersonalise capital itself. Monopolies, the handing of supervision from owners to managers, public companies traded on the stock exchange, created "social property" and represented an "abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself". Even though this anticipation of socialism was "self-dissolving", because it gave power to the sharks and wolves of the stock exchange, the existence of social property was, as Engels noted, "most gratifying" because it arranged and developed the productive forces to the point where they were ready made "for the future expropriation by the whole of society, the nation".

What was, in the time of Marx and Engels, ready made for expropriation by the nation, ie socialist *nationalisation*, has gone much further. Capital is ever more impersonal, social and international. Even capitalist *nationalisation* proved far too constricting for the productive forces. Capital, in this the last decade of the 20th century, exists in its purest, most abstract form and operates through not just a world market, but a *world economy* and *world ownership*.

The banks, insurance and stock exchanges of New York, Frankfurt, London, Tokyo, Paris and Hong Kong control and trade in capital worth trillions of dollars. Every currency, every chancellor, every captain of industry dances to the tune of their electronic quest for profit. Intermeshed by satellite and computer, these institutions function as an organic whole. They sit in all-powerful judgement over even the most trivial, the tiniest of national events, and pass the sternest of sentences within seconds. These shadowy and unpredictable manifestations of finance capital now appear as gods over material production. At their bidding equally faceless giant transnationals, with the GNPs of medium sized countries, seek out markets for world commodities; the end products of an incredibly complex international division of labour involving hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of workers. All this is light years away from the epoch of the self-sufficient industrialist!

This "abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production" is again "self-dissolving". Ivan Boesky, Alan Bond, Robert Maxwell and BCCI are just the tip of an enormous iceberg of brutal corruption, cheating and greed. The fortunes of capitalism, world wide, are totally dependent on such sharks and wolves who willingly stake and gamble away *others*' capital in the mad rush to amass wealth. Speculation rules over and relies on, and yet undermines and threatens, social wealth! Nevertheless, to paraphrase Engels, all of this is gratifying. Capitalism is now ready made for expropriation by the whole of society, the *international*.

It was to put off this logical and necessary conclusion to the development of the productive forces, to pacify the historic agent of *expropriation* by society, that since the 1870s capitalism first donned the mantle of democracy, and then, in the 1940s, social democracy. Capitalism did not do this willingly or enthusiastically. The honour goes to organised labour, and then to the ideological challenge represented by the Soviet Union, especially when it managed to sire a whole string of children in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Of course, the material basis for both capitalist democracy (here I mean universal suffrage) and social democratic capitalism was the enhanced development of the productive forces, first through imperialism and the exploitation of the colonies, and then the post-World War II super-boom. Under these conditions capitalism not only became social economically. It became social *politically*.

Sweden was the classic example. But one way or another, what can broadly be described as the 'social democratic state' or 'social capitalism' became a phenomenon characteristic, to one degree or another, of all advanced capitalist countries.

Hence the ruling ideology in Britain went from naked contempt of the masses to one nation Toryism, and from there to the claim that 'we are all workers now', and even that we were living in a Butskellite 'post-capitalist' society which would, through Keynesian planning and nationalisation of the commanding heights, evolve smoothly, impercepti-

bly, and of course peacefully, in the direction of socialism. Capitalism became a dirty word, equality the watchword. High gurus of the system even expressed barbed admiration of the Soviet Union and claimed that the west was becoming more communistic than the east.

Only hopeless doctrinaires and fools would dismiss all this as ideological froth. There was a truth to the lie.

Social capitalism introduced a whole range of measures which, in spite of their imperfections and negativity, resonated of the future. The welfare state had a reality. For those above it meant, notionally at least, swingingly high taxation, nationalisation, social obligation, the unacceptability of ostentation, and the presumption of conformity, in public at least, to a middle class life-style.

For those below it meant ever increasing wages, wide-ranging democratic rights, a whole new range of previously unobtainable consumer durables, slum clearance and mass council housing, free health provision, pensions, guaranteed full employment, grammar and then comprehensive education opportunities; in other words, the possibility of a middle class life-style.

Given the reality of the *capitalistic* nature of backward bureaucratic socialism, and the *communistic* nature of advanced social capitalism, it is churlish and historically short-sighted, to say the least, to blame the C2 'aristocratic' working class in the imperialist countries for not making revolution. A social system only really becomes ripe for revolution when it has exhausted all its possibilities. Quite clearly capitalism had not.

But what of now? Quite clearly capitalism is becoming exhausted. The post-World War II boom has come to an end. The only possibility that capitalism now guarantees is a new general crisis which threatens "the mutual destruction of the opposing classes" and a new barbarism. Already its growing exhaustion has triggered a dramatic ideological shift. Ministers of the crown now complain, not about the plight of the homeless, but, as one did only a short time ago, about falling over them on the way out of the opera!

Such statements are far from unique. Other ministers have described poor people as 'stupid' - because they don't eat the right food; the unemployed feckless - because they don't get on their bikes, and council tenants spongers - because they live in 'subsidised' housing. What eloquent testimony to the end of social capitalism!

Capitalism has started to eat its own 'communistic' achievements. From every direction the welfare state is being derided, eroded and discarded. Charity is meant to fill the vacuum. It cannot. But it does let the system off the hook and allow all sorts of fading pop stars, 'alternative' comedians, media 'personalities' and rich benefactors to display their bleeding hearts on prime time TV.

Victorian values have also taken hold of the liberal intelligentsia. Green ecologism, with its hostility to science and high technology, its mysticism and belief that population growth is some sort of plague, is as *de rigueur* nowadays around middle class dinner tables as eugenics was in the 1930s, social Darwinism in the 1900s and Malthusianism in the 1880s.

So no longer does advanced capitalism act as the mirror of the future. Not because of a lack of wealth, but because capitalism cannot contain the wealth it creates, the system has begun to regress socially. If we want to see what this means all we need to do is look to Manilla, Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Calcutta. They hold up a mirror to where Los Angles, Washington, Paris, Berlin, London, Rome and Moscow will return ... unless we organise the working class to take up the banner of progress.

The Labour Party will not do that. John Smith, like Neil Kinnock before him, fully accepts the declining capitalist agenda. What is needed is a Communist Party which can give the masses a rational, humane and liberating vision of the future and can organise them to kick over this rotting, stinking capitalist system that stands in our way.

Our organisation exists solely in order to reforge the Communist Party. That was what our 9th Party Offensive was all about. The £47,000 we raised was entirely through the selfless labour of our comrades. This splendid achievement is about far more than raising the money we need for our campaigns and publications. Its aims, methods and spirit anticipates the reformed CPGB our class needs. It also anticipates the communist society of the future our class will build.

Forward to the reformed CPGB!
Forward to communism!

&

The Rev Pat Robertson is a prominent Republican from Dallas. His fundraising letter for the president's election campaign gives us a sample of the grass roots objectivity we have come to expect from US elections. In an oblique reference to Democratic candidate Bill Clinton's supposedly feminist wife, Hilary, he writes: "The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians". So it seems that US politics have not moved on a lot since the witch trials at Salem.

Polemics are rare things in Fergus Nicholson's Communist. But stung by the defection of his old friends Andrew Murray, Brian Topping and Kevan Nelson - together with another ex-Straight Leftist leader and 'champion of gay rights', Nick Wright, who have decided to go their own way and launch the Communist Liaison Group, he decided to break the habit of a lifetime. The August issue of Communist serves up a tedious history of how the "splitters" flouted decisions to do nothing about linking up with other 'official communist' fragments that survived the liquidation of the Euro organisation. Anything that breaks from such passivity is a good thing. But despite its avowed openness to "all communists" and its intention to "take into account the entire range of communist organisations active in Britain at the present time", is the CLG part of the solution? Given the history of its founders, it has to be doubted. But hope springs eternal.

The New Communist Party's paper, The New Worker, is having a problem or two with finance. Despite its prostration before Kim Il Sung in North Korea, no cash seems to have been forthcoming from Pyongyang. Indeed, so dire have things become that the NCP really seems to be scraping the bottom of the barrel - the biscuit barrel, to be precise. August 14's New Worker reports that the "jar for small change in the New Worker office produced £3.40". Gone are the days of Czech cheques and 30 pieces of Ethiopian silver (there never was much in the way of Moscow gold). But given the quality of what is produced in the shape of The New Worker, we think the cash would have been better spent as originally intended, on coffee and biscuits.

OUR HISTORY

Ireland: National liberation and socialist revolution

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos



Was Sinn Fein "essentially a working class organisation" or, as James Connolly saw it, petty bourgeois?

Solidarity with the Irish in their war against British occupation was the theme in the CPGB Executive Committee's statement of November 25 1920, which we reproduced in *The Leninist* No114. This declared "In such a case as Ireland's - the case of a small nation held in forcible suppression by a great imperialist state - the national struggle and the class struggle are inseparable... The struggle against imperialism for national independence is a necessary phase of the struggle against capitalism for the workers' independence." and "The republican movement is essentially a working class movement. There are, it is true, middle class men as well as bourgeois by the chance of birth. But they do not mould it. They are being moulded by it. The strength and vigour and inspiration of the movement lies in the workers and the workers' organisations."

The kind of easy formula for solving the problem which was quoted above will not do. It is too easy; it is too automatic in its operation; precisely because it is a formula, of a type often heard on Marxist lips, it tends too frequently to lead to absolutely non-Marxist, ie non-revolutionary conclusions. Communists can only be guided by principles whose form may change from week to week, but whose essence remains unchangingly revolutionary; and the form of 1900 or 1916 may not be suitable for 1921.

Here are a few tentative suggestions on what the policy of 1921 should take as its foundation.

In all countries in which the political subjection of a whole race helps to maintain the supremacy of an exploiting class belonging to another race, it is natural and revolutionary that Communists should whole-heartedly support the nationalist struggle of the subject race. By supporting it they are striking a blow, and often a deadly blow, at the military or political power of the exploiters, and thereby relieving the pressure on the proletariat of the

"ruling race"; which is assisted by this means in its battle for the complete overthrow of the ruling class and the establishment of its own rule.

That rule alone can and will completely set free the subject race; and, if it is still in the first stages of economic development, it becomes possible for it to step straight on the road to communism, with the fraternal help of the proletariat of the "dominant race". That is why the Communists support the struggle of the Koreans against the Japanese exploiters; of the Persians, Turks, Tartars etc against the Russian Tsardom; of the subject races of the British Empire against our own rulers; of the Filipinos and negroes against the United States capitalists, and so on.

But there is another type of nationalist struggle in which we must act more circumspectly. It does not always happen that history gives us the opportunity of dealing with her changing phases at one time. She is capricious; she works dialectically; in other words, she often brings forth, at one and the same moment, both the movement which is "next on the agenda", and the movement which logically is its negation. Even before the bourgeoisie has had an opportunity of shaking itself free from all fetters and impediments to its expansion, history may produce the strong proletarian movement which, in all previous cases, she taught us to believe could only come after the victory of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, providing the proletariat possesses a political party which has done its duty, it can become class-conscious and self-confident enough itself to strike the blow that at once removes the national enemy and opens the road towards socialist reconstruction of society.

It was in their inability to grasp this as practical polities that the Mensheviks in Russia were distinguished from the Bolsheviks from the very first. They repeated, and repeat today, that according to the gospel, "a bourgeois revolution must precede the proletarian revolution"; and even today they continue to assert that the Bolsheviks have perpetrated a gigantic hoax upon mankind - their revolution is not a proletarian, it is a bourgeois revolution, "and the poor fellows do not know it".

We in Great Britain must guard against any self inflicted mental castration. If the national Irish insurrection had come, on the scale and with the enthusiasm it has today, not today but twenty years ago, it would have been the duty of the communists to support it as unhesitatingly, with as little mental reservation, as it is their duty today to support the Koreans and the Cingalese. But economic progress, that does not wait for Communist Parties, has produced in Ireland an exploiting capitalist class; and British political sagacity has produced in Ireland a strong capitalist farmer class; their activities, in their turn, have produced a true industrial and agricultural proletariat, with its own specific requirements, and even its own (joint) organisation, the ITWU and the Irish TUC. We have had good proof during the last five years - Connolly's "Citizen Army", Limerick, Belfast, last

year's "soviet" during the Mountjoy prisoners' strike - of the independent revolutionary capacities of the Irish workers. The rank and file of the IRA is composed of workers, who, in the large cities at any rate, have definitely divergent views from their leaders. Once this is so, communists cannot pursue the same tactics as before.

It would be absurd, of course, to deny that the Irish workers at present have "nationalist aspirations"; and it would be a crime on that account to slacken any agitation against the militarist and reactionary horrors that are being perpetrated in Ireland at the present moment.

It would be a crime, whatever their mistakes, to refuse Irish workers our support, merely out of lofty theoretical considerations. But the fact remains that those nationalist aspirations, to the extent that they exist, have become a deadweight, and became so when Connolly spoke for the first time of the "Workers' Republic"; they are being made use of by the Irish bourgeoisie, and, in so far as they prevent the Irish workers from clearly seeing their own peculiar revolutionary role in Irish affairs, they are preparing the way for the rule of an Irish class of exploiters in place of the British - a class nonetheless determined and powerful, by the way, because it is composed of solid farmers, with a stake in the country and a share in an agricultural co-operative society (to say nothing of the industrial capitalists for whom Sinn Fein is burning to provide an opportunity).

Objectively, actually, the Irish workers are quite capable of taking over affairs themselves. It remains, therefore, to prepare them psychologically, which is the function of the Party.

What, then, are the duties of a practical and revolutionary Communist Party at such a moment? I submit that they are:

- To recognise that the "nationalist aspirations" of the Irish workers, to the extent that they exist today, are dangerous illusions.
- To recognise that they do exist today.
- To agitate ceaselessly amongst the British workers, explaining that the cause of Dublin Castle is the cause of the British capitalists.
- To agitate seriously amongst Irish workers, with a view to getting them clearly to realise that they themselves, if they only decide on it and organise accordingly, are capable of taking over their country when the opportunity offers, and running it as a Workers' (Soviet) Republic, instead of allowing it to become the prey of Sinn Fein farmers and bankers and Sinn Fein manufacturers. Perhaps such agitation should take the form of helping the Irish workers to build a Communist Party of their own despite all the obvious difficulties at the present moment; that is for the Party or the Communist International to decide.

The Communist, April 16th 1921

Compiled by Doug Hulme

REVIEW

Up for grabs

James D Young, *John Maclean, Clydeside Socialist*, Clydeside Press 1992, pp280, £4.95

JOHN MACLEAN is a figure of controversy among British revolutionaries, not least because he refused to join the CPGB, yet he was appointed Soviet Consul in Glasgow and was made Honorary President of the Petrograd Soviet.

A second major question surrounding Maclean is his state of mind preceding his early death in 1923. The home office repeatedly branded him insane while he was in prison, and Maclean always maintained that he was routinely drugged during detention. Then outside, suggestions that Maclean was indeed unbalanced discredited his standing in disputes with the CPGB.

Another major aspect to John Maclean was his nationalism. He attempted to establish a separate communist party in Scotland in opposition to the CPGB. Then in 1923 he founded the Scottish Workers Republican Party.

These three issues are landmarks in any treatment of Maclean. Young cannot offer us a new insight, there is no fundamentally new angle to the book. Rather, his purpose in writing is to establish his own position with respect to the resurgence of nationalism within working class politics in Scotland today.

If ever a book were to be written to rehabilitate a discredited revolutionary, do not let James D Young do it. His historical analysis is selective and less than honest. He rewrites Maclean so that the reader might believe Maclean shared all of Young's prejudices, narrowness and sectarianism. He builds an image of Maclean as a reflection of himself, and proceeds to fawn before it. Is it any wonder after this treatment that John Maclean agrees wholeheartedly with James D Young? Yet Young is a shoddy historian and a scurrilous anti-communist. He does Maclean no favours.

Young introduces his own opinion on "Leninist class truths" (p39), the "manipulative" and "authoritarian" methods of the Bolsheviks (p80), "brainwashed" orthodoxies (p89) and an "antihumanist" Third International (p102). And since Maclean agrees with

Young, then Maclean must have been "implicitly anti-Bolshevik" (p84).

Conveniently, in a book rather poorly endowed with Maclean's own words, Young deemed it unnecessary to quote: "We who adhere to Bolshevism feel proud at the mighty efforts of our Russian comrades, to end both the war and capitalism at the same time. In everything they have done in world politics our comrades have carried out the genuine spirit of the International" (Maclean, in *The Call* November 6 1919).

So what was John Maclean if he wasn't what James D Young would have us believe?

As a revolutionary leader in Glasgow he made a great impact on the Clydeside workforce. He ran education classes in Marxism for years before World War I, but came to the attention of the state, the working class of Britain and then the world by his leading opposition to imperialist carnage. After the Bolshevik revolution he played a major part in the Hands Off Russia campaign.

He was a close friend of James Larkin, the Irish revolutionary union leader, and he shared many of Larkin's syndicalist views. But, being a teacher rather than an industrial worker, he gave syndicalism his own particular leaning.

He believed that through education the workers would come to revolutionary conclusions. The Scottish Labour College he founded, and others like it, would furnish workers' organisations with the wherewithal to build socialism.

This angle caused Maclean to underestimate the importance of the Party in the conscious development of revolution. So when the instruction and the funds came from the Comintern to form a united single Communist Party, Maclean failed to subordinate his own position to that all important goal.

Sometimes Maclean's personal enmity towards leading CPGBers is thrown up as reason. Obviously this is nonsense. And claims that Maclean was insane or deranged are hard now to credit, although he did display a marked paranoia in his later dealings with the BSP and CPGB, which would have strained relations. Criticisms of the new party notwithstanding, and some had good foundation since the CPGB in formation was a difficult entity, Maclean's decision to remain outside was sectarian.

Of all aspects of John Maclean, his nationalism is possibly the most contradictory. His belief in socialism and

world revolution are not in question. His problems arose because wrongly he saw Scotland as being in the same situation as Ireland.

In the aftermath of World War I, Maclean saw World War II looming as a contest fundamentally between British and American imperialisms. Maclean's concern was primarily to prevent this by hastening the break up of the British empire, and what was good enough for Irish workers was certainly good enough for the Scots. A worker's republic on England's border would be the biggest contribution Scottish workers could make to world revolution.

If this sounds all too familiar today, it is because Maclean was suffering with a demoralised working class after the collapse of the 1919-20 upsurge. He turned to short cut politics in despair, and as we impress upon Scottish workers today, there are no short cuts to socialism. The difference between Maclean and those who draw workers to Scotland United, however, is that unlike his present day pale pink acolytes, Maclean was first and foremost a revolutionary.

Steve Riley

Dead for revolution

Ernest Mandel, *Power and Money*, Verso, 1992, pp252

IN THE WAKE of the collapse of bureaucratic socialism, Ernest Mandel has written a trenchant defence of the feasibility and necessity of working class democracy and working class control.

Mandel has drawn on a wide range of sources in this attempt to refute the bourgeois taunts that any attempt to dispense with them and the market must produce, at best, more Stalins, Brezhnev and Gorbachevs.

Much of what Mandel writes is good orthodox stuff. If nothing else, he is a thorough journalist, and presents his argument clearly. Or it might be correct to state that he presents *other people's* argument's clearly. Mandel gives us extended quotes from Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Serge, Medvedev, etc. There is nothing wrong with this; in fact, credit

is due to his academic honesty. But he does not really take this wealth of material to anywhere new. In the light of the momentous events in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, surely the reader is not wrong to expect a book purporting to be a Marxist analysis of bureaucracy to go beyond restatement. But, by way of a conclusion, Mandel carries a three page quote from Engels' *The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man* and a word or two from Marx's *Critique of Hegel's doctrine of the state*.

Where Mandel is forced to deal with the contemporary attacks on Marxism, he eclectically bridges over the gaps in his own theory by borrowing from sources outside of Marxism. For instance, in rightly defending the attainability of abundance under communism, for some reason Mandel resorts to the language of bourgeois economics, informing the reader that this is reached when we get a "saturation of demand ... when the marginal elasticity of demand for [a product] is around or below zero" (p206). How Mandel's use of marginalism - a theory concocted by the bourgeoisie eternalising exchange relations - can be of help to understand communism, where exchange no longer exists, is a mystery to me.

This approach is characteristic of Mandel. He has often defended basic Marxist principles against bourgeois academics and 'revisers' of Marxism. But, as it will, reality presents us with a new problem that repetition of Marx or Trotsky will not answer. So instead of developing new answers using Marx's method, Mandel plays the mynah bird, and borrows from other sources. Thus, alongside Marx, Rosdolsky and Ruben in his *Marxist Economic Theory*, we also find Kondratiev's esoteric 'long waves' theory. Long waves, I think, are best left to *Brief Encounter*.

Mandel has a great breadth of knowledge, but sadly little depth. You might wonder whether this is a serious shortcoming in the leading figure in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (Usec), or just a necessary qualification. Mandel's eclecticism is perfectly suited to both creating the Trotskyite myopia over the counterrevolutions of 1989-91, and then the attempt to patch over the consequences.

Thus, in his previous book, *Beyond Perestroika*, Mandel wailed that the "whole international left thus suffered a bitter surprise" (p210). But he

comforts himself with the thought that "Five to ten years, if not fifteen years" would be necessary for capitalist restoration (p211 - critiqued in 'Bureaucratic socialism and the market' in *The Leninist* No 114). It took Trotskyism half a decade and more to recognise the revolutions in Eastern Europe after 1945 as such. The same in reverse is now occurring throughout this milieu.

Power and Money continues in this same confused vein. Mandel states that "in the Soviet Union and other such societies, it is possible to observe an embryonic transformation of parts of the bureaucracy into a capitalist class. Such a process requires a generalisation of commodity production ... It would also have to involve a further historical defeat of the working class at the social and economic levels. Such a defeat has not yet taken place" (p33). By implication, the (ex?) Soviet Union is still a "degenerate workers' state", to use Trotsky's phrase.

But no. For two pages later, Mandel says of "wage fluctuations, job insecurity, periodic bouts of unemployment" etc, in the Soviet Union, that they "functioned marginally or not at all: it is for this reason that it was not a capitalist society" (p35). Note the past tense. So, if it was not a capitalist society, may we presume that Mandel agrees with us that it is now? If so, why has he changed his mind within two pages?

Many other passages within the book betray a similar confusion. At a time when a forthright answer is demanded to the question 'what has happened in the Soviet Union?', Trotsky's foremost representative is stuck for anything resembling a coherent reply. Trotskyism in general has proved itself, in the words of Leon Trotsky, "dead for revolution" in its reactions to the 1989-91 counterrevolutionary wave. Mandel and the Usec were no exception to this.

As a restatement of some basic Marxist principles on bureaucracy, working class organisation and socialism, *Power and Money* has its merits. As an explanation of the counterrevolutions, the nature of the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the tasks before the working class today, it is useless.

Alan Merrik

ACTION

Communist Party seminars Anti Nazi League

London

All seminars start at 5pm on Sundays in central London. From Sunday September 13 we start a new seminar series on capitalism with *The method of Capital*. Others in the series include:

- Commodities and money, September 20.
- Commodity fetishism, October 11.
- Surplus value, October 18.
- Capital, October 25.

For a full list of seminars write to our usual address.

Glasgow

Seminars are at 5pm on Sundays and are currently dealing with the national question.

- September 13: Imperialism and the national question.
- September 20: The national question in the post-socialist countries.

For details, contact our London number or write to PO Box 408, Glasgow G4 9PQ.

Workers' Europe Conference

December 10-11 in Edinburgh. While the EC heads of government meet in summit, a very different meeting will be taking place.

The Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party is hosting a meeting of workers' organisations from across the Continent and beyond. We will meet to discuss our response to the plans of the bosses' for closer European integration and cooperation. While the results of various referendums like the French can seriously disrupt the process, the movement of history is clear.

For more details of the agenda and booking arrangements, contact Anne Murphy at our usual address.



Forthcoming events include support for the Anti Fascist Action mobilisation against the fascist band 'Screwdiver' on September 12. Assemble 4.30pm (sharp), main concourse - Waterloo BR.

East Ham ANL action: regular street work and campaign work on London Underground; 'Drive the racists off the tubes'. Contact Lee-Anne Bates for details of regular mobilising meetings in East London and other actions.

Unemployed Workers Charter

The UWC is launching a Solidarity And Fighting Fund with the Unemployed (Saffu). This will consist of regular donations of sympathetic branches and organisations in the workers' movement. For more details and speakers, contact Mark Fischer.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

After the Ciskei massacre: One solution - revolution!

CISKEI HAS exposed just how negotiable democracy is for the apartheid regime: not at all. South African capitalism will not willingly hand over the reigns to the masses. No demon cuts off its own claws.

The massacre was not some irrational action on the part of the regime and its lackeys. 'Bloody Monday' at Ciskei was apartheid's response to the real threat to its existence; the mass movement, which the working class has strongly stamped with its own identity through July's general strike, and subsequent actions. Like Bloody Sunday in Derry, 1972, the state is attempting to terrorise the mass movement off the streets through mass murder.

The masses, for so long reduced to bit-parts because of the ANC's emphasis on negotiations, have at last been unleashed, have moved centre stage. They have poured on to the streets and seen their own power. We have witnessed a huge and successful general strike, which has led to an ongoing campaign of mass action.

The potential power of the revolutionary movement was clearly demonstrated. However, the element that is equally clearly lacking is, unfortunately, a vanguard. What is blatantly obvious in the present South African situation is the yawning chasm that exists between what the masses want, what the masses are prepared to do, and the programme of the leadership. When even the bourgeoisie was talking about a 50,000 strong demonstration, when the masses were demanding weapons, demanding action, it was a terrible thing to see Nelson Mandela putting to the government, not 14 demands that had to be met if the power of the masses was not to be unleashed, but 14 suggestions for the government to consider!

Was it 'one person, one vote', was it the destruction of the South African army? On the contrary, he suggested more intervention from the army and the police force to stop the massacres that are in reality sponsored by those very same bodies, by the state itself.

It is exactly the same programme as the Russian Cadets went to the Tsar with. They asked the Tsar to control the Black Hundreds - those responsible for the pogroms against the Jews, for massacres of leftists. As if it was not the Tsar himself who was sponsoring and directing these thugs. Every even mildly critical examination into the death squads operating in South Africa today reveals that behind them lies the state, either in an official or an unofficial capacity. It is like appealing to the hangman to preserve human life.

Far from preventing the slaughter and improving the lot of the masses, what this actually does is to give these thugs the scent of blood. It gives the bourgeois state the sense of its own power. After all, when Nelson Mandela, instead of demanding that power be handed to the masses now risen to their feet, is seen pleading for an increased share in running the existing bourgeois state, what does that tell de Klerk? It tells him that he is still in control. What does it tell those who massacre innocent people, shanty town by shanty town, house by house? It tells them that the ANC is not going to organise any genuine defence, the ANC is not going to hunt down the attackers: rather the ANC is going to rely on the state, when the same groups are protected, sponsored and delivered by the state, if not carrying out the state's orders.

This has given reaction the confi-

Ciskei showed that freedom is not on the negotiating table. It must be won through force



Ciskei showed that unless the workers are organised and armed for revolution, they will be gunned down

dence to carry out the butchery of Bopatong and at Ciskei. The only thing that can prevent further massacres is the arming and organising of the masses in their own defence, in the struggle for working class power.

What then is our view of Nelson Mandela? Of course, we have a great deal of sympathy, a great deal of respect for the individual. This man has been prepared to sacrifice everything for his ideas. You cannot just describe him as a cynic - a sellout. But, as a politician, we as communists never had any illusions in him in the first place. Mandela is a bourgeois revolutionary - a very rare phenomenon in our age; a bourgeois revolutionary who had been forced, in spite of everything, to attempt to carry out a revolution - a bourgeois revolutionary because he had a black face, who, because of South Africa's peculiar version of capitalism, had been prevented from operating as a bourgeois.

In today's conditions, inevitably, he represents for the masses a very real danger: he will be prepared to sacrifice the interests of the masses to the interests of capitalism. Therefore, in spite of the high regard we have for him in terms of his past, how should we approach him? Frankly, in the same way as the Bolsheviks approached the Socialist Revolutionaries in Russia. They were prepared to engage in armed struggle against Tsarism, but they were not prepared to make the revolution uninterrupted and carry through a socialist revolution. Mandela has retreated even before the first, democratic revolution has been made; his programme is not to smash the apartheid state, but to reform it.

While the ANC was a few years ago talking about revolution, this is certainly no longer the case. At the centre of its strategy now is negotiation. Although it would be ridiculous to refuse under all circumstances to negotiate, this must have one objective: dividing the enemy class in order to make revolution.

Unfortunately, that is not the programme of the ANC, nor the leadership of the South African Communist Party. The SACP did have a programme of uninterrupted revolution: that is, alongside the ANC, smashing the main enemy, the apartheid

state and establishing a revolutionary state, but then - given a favourable balance of forces - carrying that revolution through uninterrupted to the tasks of socialism. Anyone who looks back at our writings on the SACP will notice that we always said that while the SACP had that programme, the danger was that it would interpret it in a rightist way, rather than in a Leninist way. After all, it always fostered illusions in the ANC: it formed a strategic, not a tactical, alliance with it.

Under the impact of the apartheid regime's come on and the collapse of world socialism, this centrism has moved sharply to the right. No longer does the SACP leadership merely interpret its programme in an ambiguous way: it has abandoned it. In spite of its attempts to create a certain distance from the ANC leadership, it adopts in all essentials the same approach - the approach of negotiations, of pressure politics, which, if pursued consistently, will be the road to disaster.

Back in the mid 1980s, leading figures in the Party, such as the late Comrade Mzala, were debating how Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) could be made more effective in the development of conditions of *insurrection*, how its experience and cadres could be used to create armed bodies based securely on the masses. These, argued Mzala and others, would have a central role in the insurrection against the apartheid regime, and the uninterrupted transition to socialism. Now, although the idea has been temporarily shelved because of the suspension of negotiations, the question has become the absorption of MK into the South African Defence Force, as part of the process of 'democratising' the existing state. True, recent massacres have produced a shifting emphasis. Chris Hani, in the SACP's monthly paper *Umsebenzi*, rightly states: "Our struggle needs well organised SDUs made up of our best revolutionary fighters" (July 1992). But these Self Defence Units, the likes of which Comrade Mzala saw as being central to insurrection, are being consigned by Hani to "political and defensive operations". The fact is that all the SACP/ANC has is such a 'defensive' position; a 'defensive' position that meant that

the Ciskei demonstration could not be defended, as arming the masses could be seen as jeopardising negotiations.

The mass action which exploded in the form of the general strike, and which continues today, is not seen as the movement and lever of revolution, but as a force to be used for reforms handed down from de Klerk. The editorial in the same issue of *Umsebenzi*, on the general strike and campaign of mass action, makes this clear: "When we return to the negotiating table, it should be to discuss the transfer of power to the people through a democratically elected constituent assembly". The "best revolutionary fighters" praised by Hani are being denied the need to fight for revolution by the reformist strategy that he presents them with. The dead of Ciskei are the bitter fruit of such a strategy.

Neither is Hani's statement after Ciskei - that he would not be responsible for restraining the masses after such an atrocity - any comfort. It is not a positive guide to action, just a condonation of any response. But the revolution will not be won on the basis of spontaneous anger. The reality of this could well be that it just allows militants to let off steam before the ANC tries to drag them back to the negotiat-

ing table.

When Lenin argued for the necessity of the fight for a constituent assembly, for instance in his *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, he was clear that this must be done through revolution, not "the negotiating table".

In any case, when presented with the Soviets, with the workers' militia, the real movement of the masses swept aside the need for the constituent assembly after February 1917. The real movement had gone beyond the demands of the Bolshevik programme, and Lenin drew up a strategy based on this in his *April Thesis*. The mass movement surges around the SACP leaders, with its organs of democracy, its SDUs and other elements of potential working class state power. Yet these leaders merely want to use this movement as a bargaining chip at the negotiating table.

It is necessary to strongly criticise the orientation of the SACP. But we must also be clear that it is the organisation of pivotal importance in South Africa now. We understand that parties are far more important than individuals. There are, no doubt, many individuals in South Africa who share our views. But are they connected directly with the mass movement? Are they engaged in an ideological battle for the mind of the Party of the proletariat? The individuals of whom we read in the Trotskyite press are of no use. They are voices in the wilderness. What is needed is a challenge, a struggle within the Party, not a struggle on the fringes, or a commentary from the outside. What the proletariat needs is not advice from ivory-towered intellectuals, but a struggle by proletarian leaders who are prepared to fight for the Leninist programme.

In South Africa today, given the unleashed mass movement and correct leadership, all sorts of new splits can be created within the still powerful ruling class. Crucially, if imagination is used, whole sections of the white working class can be prised over to our side, or neutralised. Then power will be there for the taking.

Now is the moment to openly fight for the communist programme and for communist leadership of the mass movement. There is nothing to lose, everything to win. Without revolution, the bourgeoisie - white and black - will turn to fascism. With revolution, South Africa will not only shake the African continent, but the world.

Jim Blackstock

Revolutionary solidarity

THIS NOVEMBER, at the invitation of a number of South African trade unions, representatives of the PCC of the CPGB will be visiting South Africa. While there, our comrades will be addressing union meetings and talking to South African communists. The working class has been thrust into action in South Africa like in no other country at the moment. They are eager for ideas and debate. This presents us with a rare and valuable opportunity to forge links and exchange experiences with revolutionaries fighting in a revolutionary situation.

To get the most from this, we need the finance to get comrades over there, and for their travels once in South Africa.

In addition, we have another internationalist appeal to make of our read-

ers: we are trying to finance a comrade from a communist organisation in the Ukraine to speak at our forthcoming summer school. Again, we need financial support to allow us to do this.

As always, our resources are low, and what exists is already claimed by other important areas of political work. We therefore appeal to you, our readers and supporters, to contribute to this important visit. You have not let us down in the past; we know you won't now. We want individual contributions, but also raise the South Africa tour in your union branch. This in itself will help link together workers in our two countries.

Send donations to the usual address. Cheques payable to November Publications.